

The Australian National University

Institute of the Arts



Canberra School of Art

GRADUATE DIPLOMA of ART

1999

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REPORT

PRESENTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

OF THE GRADUATE DIPLOMA OF ART

Abstract

What I have tried to do with my work is break new ground, to contemporaries the way Thais view ceramics, away from functional vessels to making objects with more metaphorical associations. This is my journey. A study taking the form of an exhibition of *Graduating Exhibitions* at the *Canberra School of Art Gallery* from *March 12 to 22, 1999* which comprises the outcome of the Studio Practice component, together with a Report which documents the nature of the course of study undertaken.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the staff who gave me a chance to try new things. A special thanks to Nigel, Janet, Anita, Tony, Greg, Hiroe, Michael, Sonia and my Australian friends for their friendship and discussion. Also, and to my Thai friends, who talked Thai and helped me when I needed it. I had a good time in the CSA. Most of all I would like to thank my parents, who gave me the opportunity to further my studies.

Introduction

My story

To talk about myself, I should start from childhood. I was born and raised in Bangkok. I studied at the same school as my father, Bangkok Christian College which was the first private school of Thailand, founded in 1852 by American missionaries. So from the time I was young, I was stuck between a Thai culture and a foreign culture. I studied at the same school until I finished high school. After that, I was accepted to Rangsit University, Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Major in ceramics design because I like to make a real object, rather than work with paper. When I graduated, I didn't want to work in the industrial ceramics factories of which there are many in Thailand. Many graduates do work in factories where they become part of a design team rather than making individual work. So, I trained to be a junior designer at Solas Company Ltd. With *Siddhigai Solashinda* * a well known design in Thailand Managing Director. He taught me the print media business, but I was not happy just designing. I wanted to make ceramics myself, and so I decided to continue my study in that area.

* See appendix 1

Original proposal

Aim

To tell the story of Bangkok. It is also many stories. In telling this story, I will refer to the people, the history and the changes that have taken place. I would like to represent my stories and my society through the language of ceramics.

The purpose of this research is to help people realize that we can use art such as ceramics to communicate with each other. I want this communication to work in two directions. As I learn about Australian society by being here, I hope Australians will gain some insight into Bangkok society in my work.

Method and Resource

This research will use slip painting and printmaking as a component of this project and uses Australian clay for method. I think that I will improve my skill in using this technique.

My background is in Ceramics Design and I want to extend my art, skill and understanding of primarily Australian ceramics and to some extent printmaking on ceramics.

Context

I was born and raised in the capital city and center of Thailand. Bangkok has grown and has been greatly affected by foreign influences. Nevertheless Thai people still maintain their unique Thai identity and some traditions continue. I will use metaphor to tell my stories. I will use signs, colour, to represent my customs and society.

My influences

(i) Influence by a Thai ceramist

In Thailand, ceramics is not a popular art. Thais mostly think of ceramics only as factory produced functional ceramics. An exception is Surojna Sethabuta, who is a full time ceramist. Unfortunately I did not have a chance to study with her in the ceramics department, because she retired from the university before I was accepted there. None the less I know her not only as a ceramist, but as the teacher of my teacher. Every year, ceramic students went to her house for “Wai Ku” (a Thai tradition where students show respect to their teacher.)

(ii) Other influence

Apart from Surojna I am also interested in Alessi is “ **THE 100% MAKE-UP (1993-92)**” The project consists of a white porcelain vase produce in ten thousand units. And his “ *Species not Series*”

What we had mind was a system of objects similar to that of a natural species. An aesthetic industrial system bears a certain resemblance to biological organism: in its pulsation, mechanism, materials, colours and the making on its skin. A futuristic industrial design project can be conduces on the invention of a limited experiment starting from scratch, as in that of a species.

In fact the Species is a large grouping of similar organisms which produces a fecund inheritance through interbreeding: in our case a world run by internal rules, a system of structurally

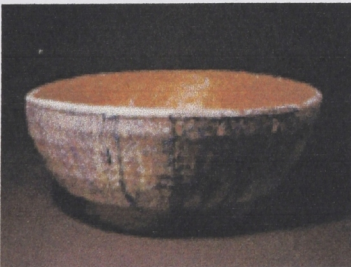
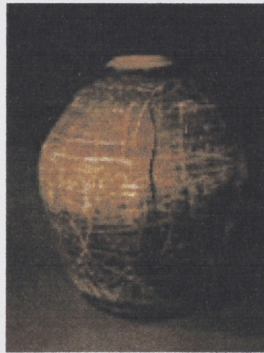
*similar but all identifiable and different objects. With an inner logic of reproduction. As simulation to nature and penetration of nature, where what matters, together with the meaning of single individuals, is the compactness of their cosmos in tended a puzzle.*¹

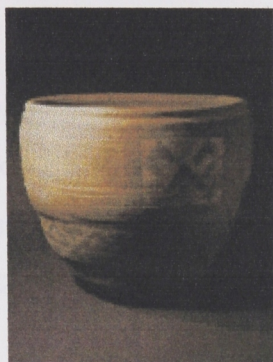
I liked Alessi's ideas as to how there was a lot of repetition with subtle variations and so I introduced this into my work. Thailand's contemporary ceramic art is not a popular medium for contemporary artists but I tried to break new ground by using ceramics in a modern way.

¹ Meret Gabra – Liddell, ALESSI THE DESIGN FACTORY, pg. 118

Relevant works by other artists

The work that has had greatest impact on me is "*Homemage to her Story*" by Surojna Sethabutr. Her works consist of a vessel, bowl, cup, plate, earthen jar and a teapot, which express the characters of five of the artist's very close friends. The first time I saw her work, I was interested in the form of her ceramic containers, and the non-commercial glaze and nothing more than that because I didn't know what they were based on. But one day I read a book and I saw some work that seemed to have the same intentions. This similarity helped me understand the relationship between Surojna's art and her subjects. The basis of the relationship is one of respect. Surojna's five friends are depicted respectfully in her objects.



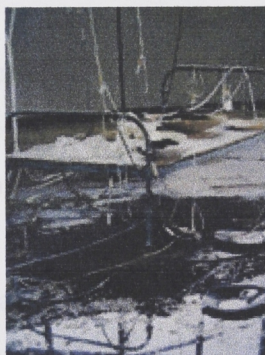


Homemage to her Story" by Surojna Sethabutr

For example the plate below of Surojna's is representative of her friend Araya. She chose a contemporary style German plate because recently Araya has been working art in a modern way. She creates situations of metaphors and analogies of reading a poem. Her works become a complex of layers open to different interpretations.



Water's never still, 1995



The dinner with cancer, 1993

Working methods

As my proposal says, I wanted to tell the story of my society. In the past, Bangkok was built on the bank of the Chao Phraya River, with the river and canals used as the arteries of the city, and as such it was often seen as a City of Water.



The cover of LE PETIT JOURNAL issue 12 August 1893 show *Bangkok, the capital of Siam as a city of water.*

It was logical to choose the form of a boat as a metaphor for Bangkok, and the form of a fish to represent the people because fish are appropriate citizens for the City of Water. Also the form of the fish compliments the form of the boat.

I started by building my clay object based on a real boat, and developed it from there so as to make my form more like a building block. I tried to choose clay that was most suitable for my objects based on its color, workability and firing range in the slip cast approach. I thought that the slip cast process is the most appropriate.

for my desired output, as I wanted many objects in the same shape, so as to be able to install my objects combined into "City information."

Impression/expression of Bangkok

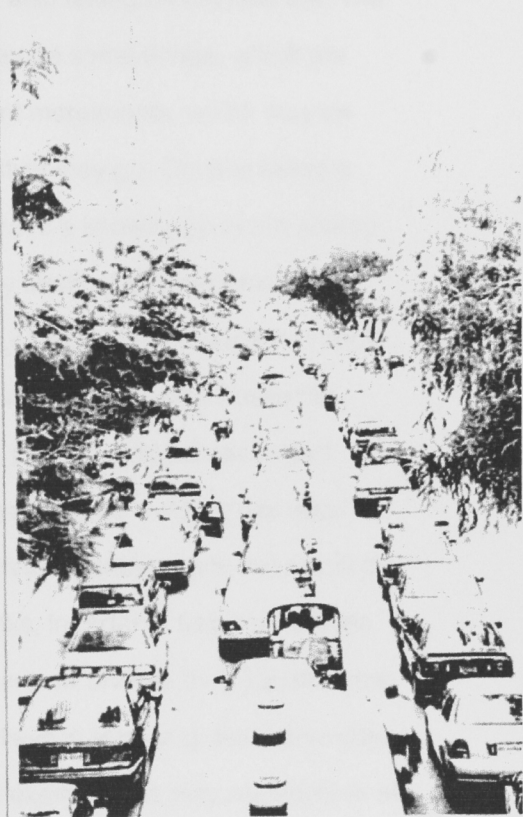
A short full immersion in Bangkok is a physical and mental experience. The knowledge starts by the senses, as you are immediatly plunged in his hot and polluted atmosphere. On your sweat body you feel Bangkok as a strongness coming from far away: a strongness made by an antique, unique history and by a fast, too fast progress which fill the city with crazy skyscrapers and with a thick river of strong smelling cars and motorbikes. And this river of cars and motobikers is so thick that you can't fight no more against the traffic. You endure it and you learn a different measure of the time. To shift from one place to another one (also not so far) you spent hours imprisoned in a car and you see from the windows several faces of the same city. It happened to me an afternoon going toward River City. During the way crossing discharges, car cemeteries, markets, parkings and highways full of cars and skyscrapers under construction I realised that Bangkok represents perfectly

the city of a film, like Blade Runner, the collapsed city of the science fiction.

Bangkok is the city of fluidity (the river and the canals). When you see at the corner of a street, aside a private house or aside a big modern shop center the shrine with flower's garlands you realize the past is still there and it is still alive, despite the incoming furious progress. Past and present can live together in Bangkok in a sort of strange Buddhist harmony.

You breath extremely polluted air but also the peace of a religion of beauty and wealth. Bangkok with its contradictions is the city which can help you to survive in the next future: the fuzzy future, the future of complexity. To visit Bangkok is more than a touristic tour: It is a deep, sensorial, experience of life in its worst and best aspects. As the anguish for the future and the nostalgia for the past Bangkok remains forever in you hart.

Cristina Morozzi

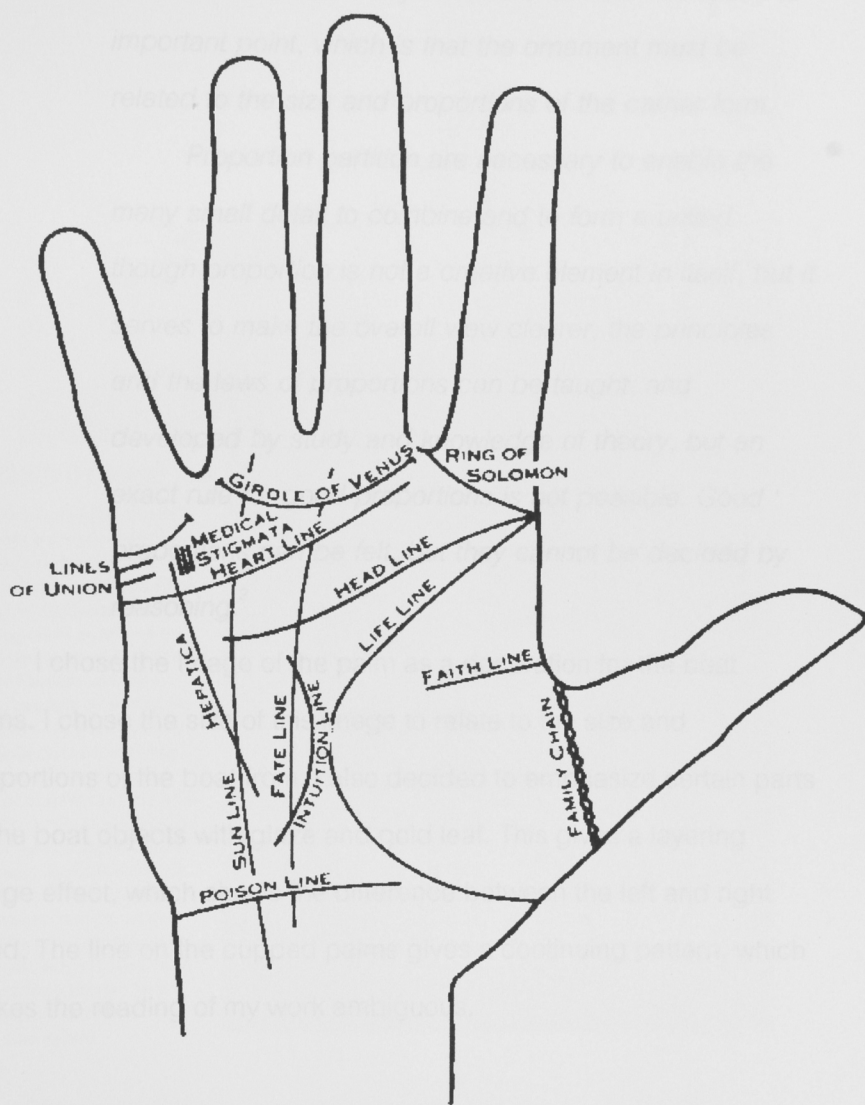


อ่านจดหมายคุณ Cristina Morozzi ที่ส่งตามมาหลังจากตัว กลับไปอีตาดีแล้ว ก็รู้สึกว่าการแปล ความเนื้อหาของกรุงเทพฯในแบบ ของเธอนั้นมีพลังเร้าอันรุนแรงไม่

แพ้สามีคือ Massimo Morozzi แค อย่างใด พวกเราอ่านแล้วมีความ รู้สึกอย่างไรกันลองเขียนมาเล่าให้ กันฟังบ้าง ใครมีไอเดียดีๆมีรางวัล ให้ด้วยเอ้า

Impression/expression of Bangkok, art 4d, July 1997 by Cristina Morozzi

I think that my Society is entering a new era, one more influenced by western cultures. I think that this is good because while things are evolving, it is still possible to live according to ancient customs, beliefs and ceremony while also taking on the new era. The lifestyles can exist together. There may be some things, which are forgotten, some things such as ancient monuments, which may be destroyed, and the old architectural style may go. Despite being a product of the new generation, I still have a knowledge of our history and the ancient ways. There are many kinds of stories of history, of religion, of architecture, of music and so forth within Bangkok. I could have represented any of these in my work. But I have chosen the lifestyle of "Bangkokians" in general, and the contradictions and developments therein. For example, students of modern day may dress following western styles and drive expensive cars, though at the same time, they show respect to monks, in order to help themselves pass exams. "Bangkokians", no matter how diverse their social status may be, are still superstitious and believe in fate. (e.g. that some days are better than others to sit important exams). This may not apply to all Bangkokians, it is just a trend which I have observed. I do not think that it is bad, it is just the way things are. I have represented this progression in lifestyle using the palm patterns found in the palms of our hands. The cupped palm represents the Thai belief in the palm our future. Our fortune can be read and although in Thailand we believe this strongly, it is also widely practiced elsewhere.



Palm's picture, "How to read palms", MAX, issue 19 JAN/FEB 1999 by Luke Anissimoff

The ornament is always a part of the whole and its charismatic is that always needs a carrier. This leads to important point, which is that the ornament must be related to the size and proportions of the carrier form.

Proportion partition are necessary to enable the many small detail to combine and to form a united though proportion is not a creative element in itself, but it serves to make the overall view clearer, the principles and the laws of proportions can be taught, and developed by study and knowledge of theory, but an exact rule for good proportions is not possible. Good proportions can be felt, but they cannot be decided by reasoning.²

I chose the image of the palm as a decoration for the boat forms. I chose the size of this image to relate to the size and proportions of the boat form. I also decided to emphasize certain parts of the boat objects with glaze and gold leaf. This gives a layering image effect, which shows the difference between the left and right hand. The line on the cupped palms gives a continuing pattern, which makes the reading of my work ambiguous.

² Jame Storr Ornaments and Surfaces on CERAMICS pg. 71



Pattern Recognition

A picture may tell a thousand words, but every viewer hears a different tale. French photo-journalist Laurent Monlaü, of the Rapho agency, shot this image while on assignment for the French edition of Geo. The Mauritanian woman reclines, fully covered for the camera and proudly displaying her henna-dyed hands. Western eyes may see her pose as defensive and fearful, and read the image as a comment on the suppression of women. Monlaü's full series on Moorish society shows, however, that the women of Mauritania have unusual freedoms by orthodox Arab standards; they can pursue careers and divorce.

- Tibor Kalman

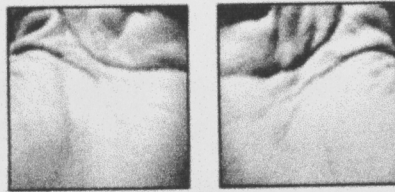
Pattern Recognition, WIRED, Jun 1998 by Tibor Kalman

This article highlights the way different people have different interpretations of patterns and images they encounter.

What is pattern?

The word "pattern" is here used in a somewhat technical sense not, as the dictionary has it, to mean "a specimen " nor yet " a shape or model for imitation", but ornament and especially ornament in repetition. Pattern is, in fact, the natural outgrowth of repetition; and in every case the lines of its construction may be traced; they pronounce themselves, indeed, with geometric precision. Geometric pattern grew, of course, out of primitive methods of workmanship. No mechanism is so simple but it gives rise to it.³

My pattern was inspired by the effect of grids of windows on buildings. And based on geometry. I took a photo of my palm and cut out only the palm cup area in a square size of 3x3 cm . And then sent the image to make a *decal*.^{*}



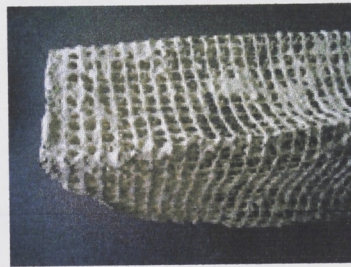
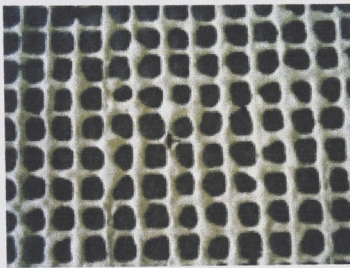
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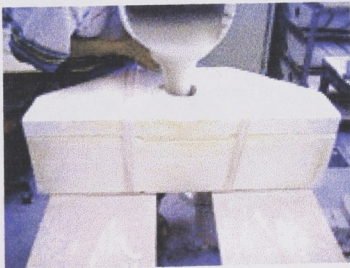
³ Lewis F. Day, PATTERN DESIGN, Taplinger Publishing CO., INC., New York

^{*} see appendix 9

I made a *mould*^{*} and started experimenting with some other techniques of moulding such as slip casting and pressing in the mould. I tried to incorporate and make use of alternate material, in my clay work, such as metal wire. This altered the imagery. I studied the characteristic of the type of clay.



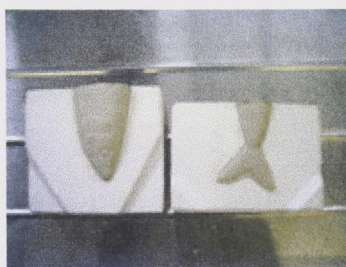
I decided to use slip casting for my process. I used white earthenware for a *slip recipe*.^{*}



* see appendix 2

* see appendix 4, materials

After that I added patinated with dental firing it a second time at 850°C and decorating it with gold leaf.



I cast* the head and tail of the fish separately, and stuck the parts together when the cast was not exactly in the same position. When the cast dried to a leatherhard stage I removed the seam lines with a sponge. And when it was really dry I sand* it before spraying* a matt glaze on some pieces before firing it then at 1100 c in an electric kiln.



* see appendix 3

* see appendix 6

* see appendix 7

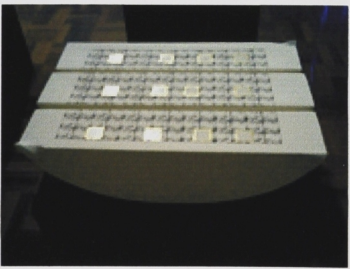
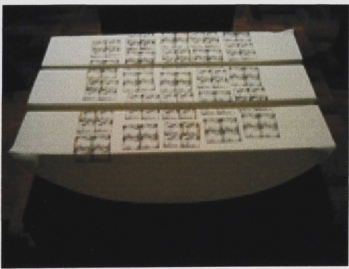
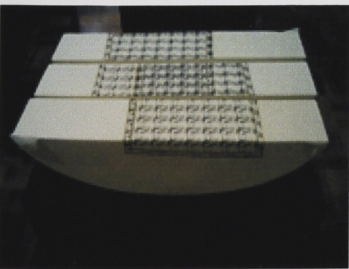
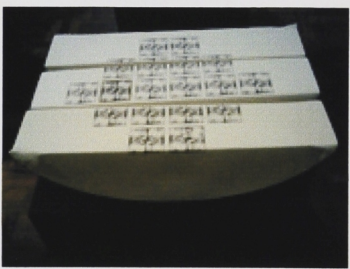
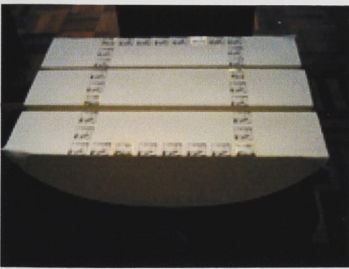
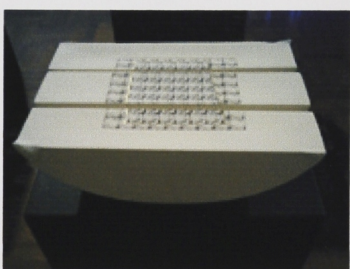
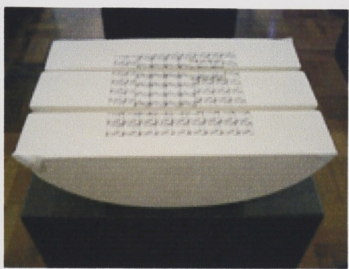
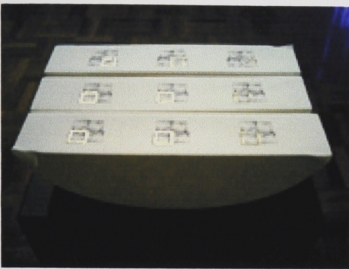
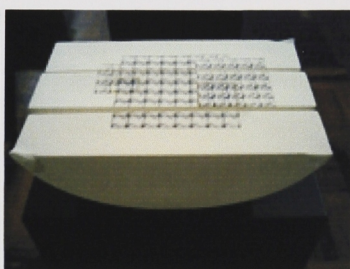
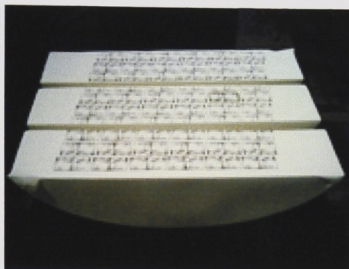
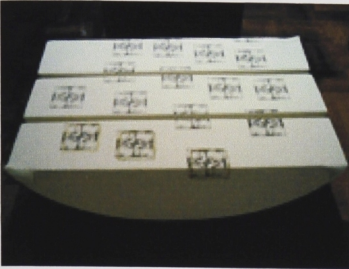
After that I added patterning with decal firing it a second time at 850°C and decorating it with gold leaf.

I used *gold leaf*^{*} for decoration to emphasize certain parts of my objects. I associate the color gold with valuable things, such as stories with religious connotations. I wanted my objects to have this quality of association. Also because of the emphasis put on gold in Bangkok, it is a colour which make me think of home and the abundant use of it in the decoration around in Bangkok.

^{*} see appendix 11, materials

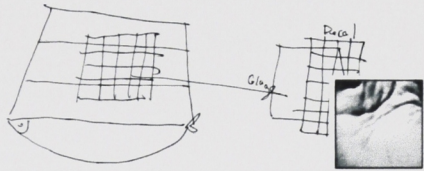
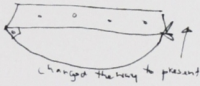
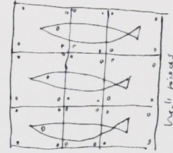
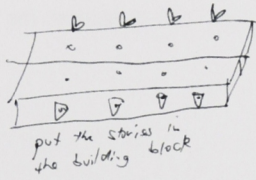
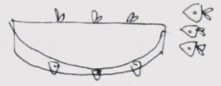
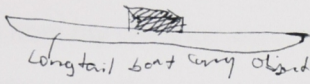


"City of water" at Canberra School of Art on 12-22 March 1999.



Some individual groups “City of water” at the exhibition on 19 March 1999

The rest in action



Some pieces didn't work, packing, nearly finished

Conclusion

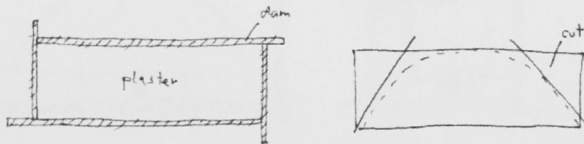
This year while I've worked in Australia, I have had an opportunity to learn more about Australian art and to work in a different ceramics area from my previous work. The work, the process to carry it out, and the ideas developed will allow me to continue and develop a new body of work. I see the present exhibition as a photograph taken on my journey rather than an arrival at the station.

Appendix 1 **Siddhijai Solasachinda**

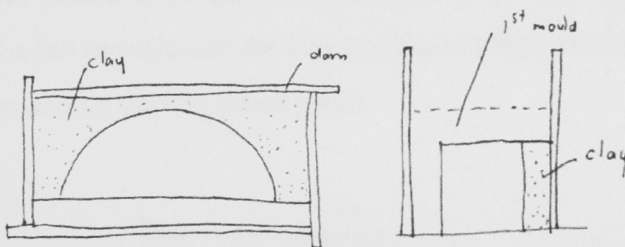
He was educated at St. Edmund's College, Hertfordshire, England and received an Honors Degree in Graphic Design from Chelsea College in London in 1980. After spending one year as a designer in London with Butler Dennis Garland and Partners, he returned to Thailand and for two years was an Art Director at Kenyon & Eckhardt, followed by five years with Huge Co. He then became Creative Group Head at J, Walter Thompson for a further two years prior to setting up his own company in 1990. His account experience includes work for IBM, Kodak, Listerine, Peugeot and The Royal Orchid Sheraton. Siddhijai has received numerous Industry awards, the latest being two TACT awards for Best Print Advertising and two awards from the P.R. society of Thailand in the Thai Culture category.

Appendix 2 Prototype & mould

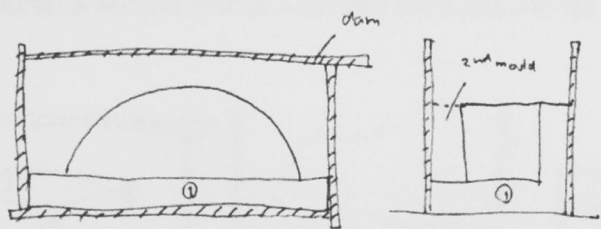
1. I started to make a prototype, my prototype had two parts. The first part is a boat, and the second part is a fish head and tail. I made the boat form by cut a square of plaster block.



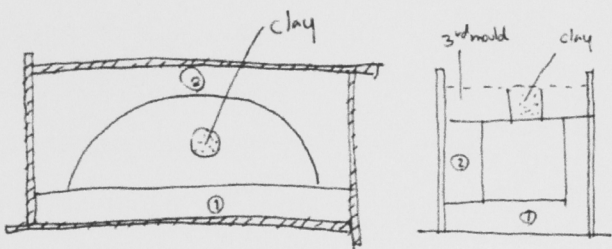
2. I used a small saw blade to scrape and sandpaper to finish it. I also carved a whole fish from plaster.
3. I started to make a mould by cover a prototype with soap. (Soap prevents plaster from sticking when pour another layer) I designed three pieces for the boat form and two pieces mould for the fish head and tail.



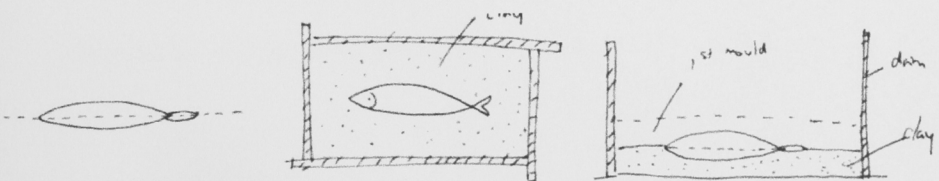
Then I turned them over to pour another side for a second piece.



I poured the last mould and made a drain hole by putting a clay in the middle

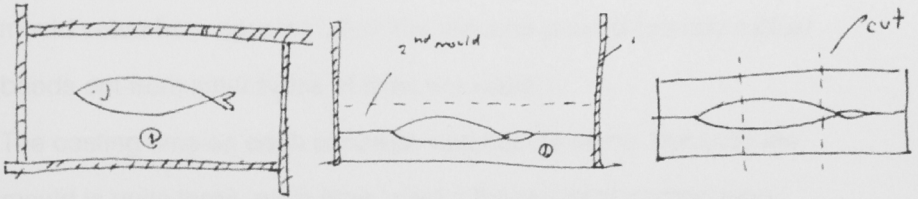


4. I then used a colour pencil to separate the fish into two sides. I put a fish prototype on the clay and made a dam around it and then poured the first mould piece.



Appendix 3 Casting stage

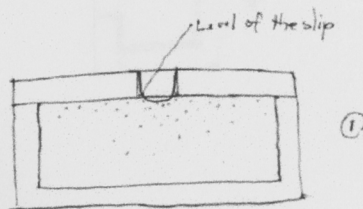
1. I sponged the inside of the mould with the soap.
5. I then turned it over and covered it with the soap and then poured a second mould. I cut only the head and tail part.



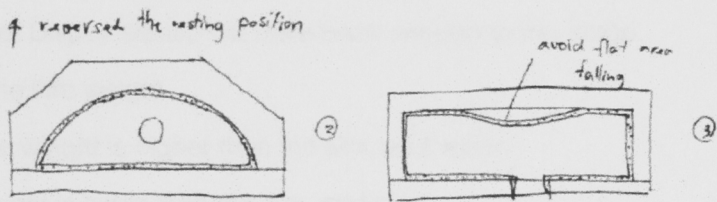
6. I prepared to dry all of them before casting.

Appendix 3 Casting stage

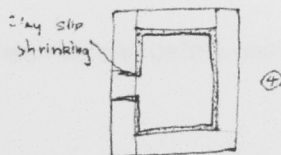
1. I sponged the inside of the mould with warm water to remove loose bits of clay/plaster etc, and excess any soap which might be left from the mouldmaking.
2. I used wire hoops to hold the mould parts together to prevent the mould seam from opening when the slip was poured (usually rubber bands cut from inner tubes of tyres are used).
3. The casting time on each occasion was not the same. Because the mould is quite large, each time I cast it the mould absorbed more water. This meant that for each successive cast I had to leave the slip in the mould for longer (about 10-15 minutes) as the mould became progressively more saturated.
4. I poured the slip into the mould through the drain hole and filled the mould to the brim. As the mould absorbed the water from the slip, the level of the slip in the drain hole dropped.
5. When the slip had been in the mould for long enough, judged by the thickness of the hardened slip close to the mould, I marked the level to which the slip had dropped in the neck of the drain hole (see diagram 1). In the next and subsequent pours, I let the level of the slip drop to this point before draining out any excess all slip.



6. I inverted the mould to pour out the excess slip and because of its weight (mould and slip), I supported it as in the photo with two planks of wood suspended over the slip bucket.
7. I let the mould stand inverted in this position for 10 minutes.
8. Once the excess slip had drained out, I reversed the resting position of the mould (see diagram 2) because I wanted to avoid the long flat section of the mould falling away from the inside surface of the mould. (see diagram 3)



9. The mould remained in this position for 12 hours until I could see the stiffened clay slip shrinking away from the inside surface of the drain hole. (see diagram 4). Then I cut the clay at the drain hole and opened the mould.



Appendix 4 Slip preparation

1. Add water to mixer.
2. Add minimum Sodium Silicate N42 diluted 50/50 with warm water.
3. Mix and put aside minimum Dispex N40 diluted 50/50 with warm water.
4. Agitate mixer as you add some clay, the slip will gradually thicken. Add a small amount of Dispex mixture to maintain its fluidity and then add more clay. Continue this process until all the clay is in the mixer and a smooth creamy consistency is obtained. The maximum amount of Dispex should not have been needed to this stage.
5. Check the litre weight

If the litre weight is higher than the aim, add water.

If the weight is lower than the aim, add clay.

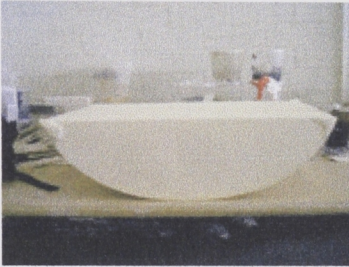
For an accurate litre weight measurement, contact Walkers for a litre weight bottle and a calculation chart.
6. Mix for 1 hour (more for multi bag mixes) then check if more Dispex mixture is required for pouring fluidity.
7. Allow slip to mature for 24 hours.
8. Reblend.
9. Sieve through an 80 mesh screen before use.

Appendix 5 **Recycling**

1. Recycle the pieces that cracked and broke by smashing the rejected objects so as to make them very small fragments.
2. Add water according to the required amount.
3. Leave to sit overnight.
4. Mix the recycle clay for an hour.
5. In the recycling stage, there is no need to add any extra Sodium Silicate nor Dispex.
6. Sieve before reusing it.

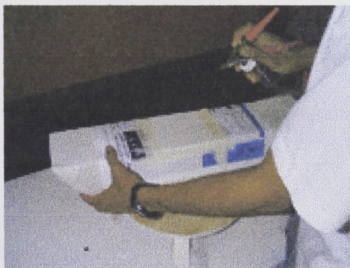
Appendix 6 Sanding

1. When the cast dried to a leatherhard stage, I removed the seam lines with a sponge.
2. When it was properly dried, I sanded it with sandpaper no.600 to produce a smooth finish.

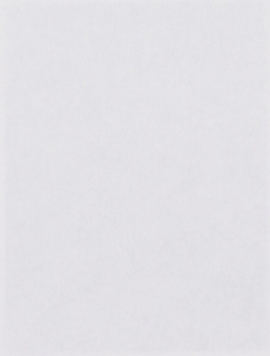
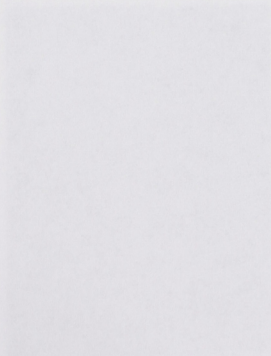


Appendix 7 glazing

1. I marked the areas that wanted to spray with glaze with marking tape.
2. And I proceeded to spray the desired areas with an airbrush.



I had a problem with the no. 2 that during the spraying the no. 2 didn't cover the box. It made the writings of the no. 2 and the crack between the no. 2 and the no. 2. The no. 2 and the no. 2 are the rest of the box.

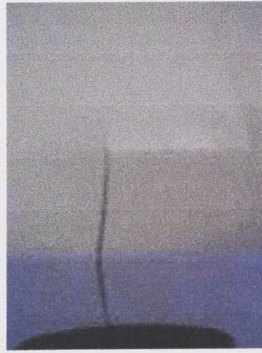
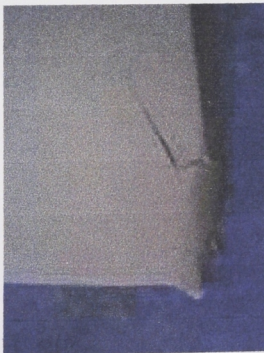


Appendix 8 Firing

1. I fired my objects at 1100°C in an electric kiln for an oxidation firing. I used an electric kiln as I was not after a special firing effect.
2. And I started decorate firing at 850°C for a decal.

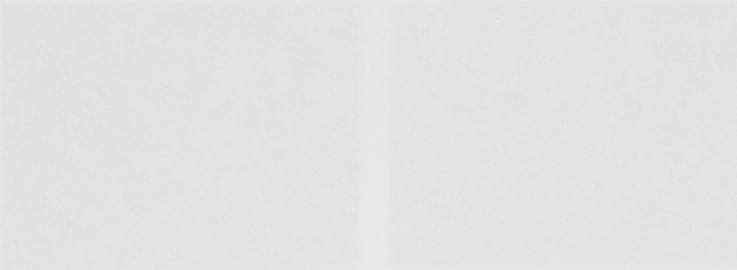


I had a problem with kiln no.3. I had dunting cracks because kiln no.3 cools down too fast. It made the joinings of the head and tail crack because of the difference in thickness between the head, tail area are the rest of the boat form.



Appendix 9 Decal production

Decals or transfers are a relatively simply way of putting print onto a ceramic surface. Usually decals are made by printing an image or design in oil-based ceramics inks called ' Decal ' paper (it was known for many years as ' Thermoflat ' paper, and occasionally may still appear as such). When dry, the paper with its printed images is coated with a liquid lacquer or varnish called ' Covercoat ', which upon drying becomes a thin plastic sheet which includes the printed image. Covercoat can be applied by squeegeeing through a blank silk screen.



Appendix 10 Decal application

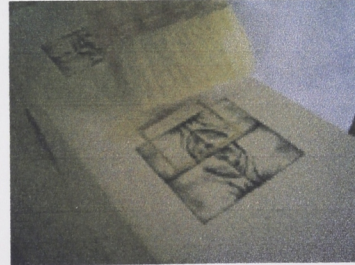
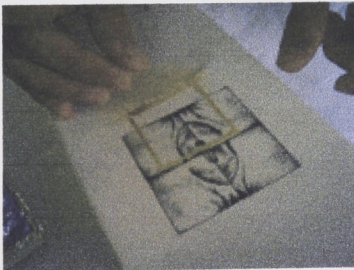
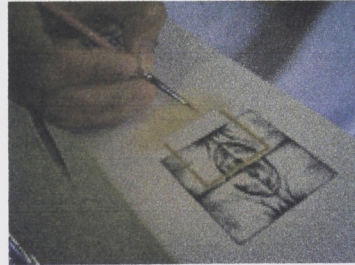
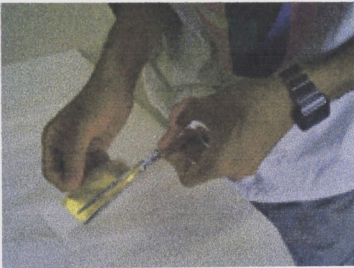
Place a decal in warm water, the plastic sheet including the print, will slide off the gummed paper. This can be placed onto the ceramics surface, usually glazed or polished, where it can be slid around until correctly positioned. It is then firmed into place with a rubber kidney, or by rubbing with a finger, ensuring that no pockets of air or water are trapped below the covercoat surface. The residues of gum help the transfer to adhere. Upon firing the plastic burns away, leaving the printed image or design on, or in, the ceramics surface.



Appendix 11 Gold leaf

After firing a decal, I decorated it with gold leaf. For this I used glue called “Keep”

1. I drew a line I wanted to decorate with lead pencil and followed this with glue applied with a small paintbrush.
2. I used sharp scissors to cut the gold leaf still attached to the paper, being careful not to let the gold leaf peel off, as it is prone to do. For this, the hands must be totally dry.
3. I then transferred the gold leaf to the glue line and was done.



Materials

1. Clay slip – Walker White Earthenware Middle fire. This choice of slip coincided with my colour scheme, and was technically viable.

Powder clay 25 kilos

Water 12 litres

N42 Sodium Silicate 70 mls

N40 Dispex 90 mls

2. Glaze – I decided to use EC 111 Matt glaze from Walker, as the colour looks similar to my original clay colour.

3. Decal – I had my decals made by external professionals.

4. Gold leaf – red gold leaf for use in memorials.

5. Glue- *Keep* specialist paint “ *Gold Size 024* “

Epilogue

The Station

By Robert J. Hastings

Tucked away in our subconscious is an idyllic vision. We see ourselves on a long trip that spans the continent. We are travelling by train. Out of the windows we drink in the passing scene of cars on nearby highways, of children waving at a crossing, of flatlands and valleys, of mountains and rolling hillsides, of city skylines and village halls.

But uppermost in our minds is the final destination. Bands will be playing and flags waving. Once we get there our dreams will come true, and the pieces of our lives will fit together like a jigsaw puzzle. How restlessly we pace the aisles, damning the minutes for loitering – waiting, waiting for the station.

“When we reach the station, that will be it!” we cry.

“When I’m 18.”

“When I buy a new 450SL Mercedes Benz!”

“When I put the last kid through college.”

“When I have paid off the mortgage!”

“When I get a promotion.”

“When I reach the age of retirement, I shall live happily ever after!”

Sooner or later we must realise there is no station, or one place to arrive at once and for all. The true joy of life is the trip. The station is only a dream. It constantly outdistances us.

“Relish the moment” is a good motto, especially when coupled with Psalm 118:24: “This is the day, which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. “It isn’t the burdens of today that make men mad. It is the regrets over yesterday and the fear of tomorrow. Regret and fear are twin thieves who rob us of today.

So stop pacing the aisles and counting the miles. Instead, climb more mountains, eat more ice cream, go barefoot more often, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets, laugh more, cry less. Life must be lived as we go along. The station will come soon enough.

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